The official newsletter of the United Fanzine Organization

TFRAGS

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April 2013

TETRAGRAMMATON FRAGMENTS

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TETRAGRAMMATON FRAGMENTS #227
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CHAIRMAN CHATTER

Thanks to **David Branstetter** for drawing the front and back covers of this issue! Both of these illustrations were taken from David's deviantART gallery (with his permission, of course) at ***strawmancomics.deviantart.com/gallery/*** The front cover illo is described there as depicting "a husband and wife who met in the military and are still married to this day." David is the newest member of the UFO, having been voted in last month, bringing the group's roster up to seven members (plus two honorary members: Main and Keeter). There were three UFO memberzines released since last issue: **Tales of Fantasy #60, HCU: Confidential #3** and **Ditkomania #90**.

Chris Ed Rock has not yet contacted me about providing dues money and thus is not considered a member despite the "yes" vote that was taken last year or so. Given this lack of communication, I think that if he wants to become a member in the future, he should reapply all over again, rather than automatically be accepted based on the previous vote.

BRANSETTER: paid till March 2014
BULLOCK: paid until May 2014
CARRIER: paid until June 2013
ENSIGN: paid until Jan. 2014
GAFFORD: dues expired (send $20)
IMES: paid until Feb. 2014
JOHNSON: paid until March 2014

Here are each members' **"must publish by"** dates:

BRANSETTER: March 2014
BULLOCK: March 2014
CARRIER: April 2013
ENSIGN: October 2013
GAFFORD: January 2013 *(overdue)*
IMES: March 2014
JOHNSON: March 2014

If it turns out that any member needs a publishing extension, simply ask. I've granted Sam Gafford an extension since he plans to release a zine this year.

"Must write" a column for TF #227: Rob Imes. (Yep, I skipped this time around, due to time constraints. I'll make sure to have a column next issue.)

The deadline for the next issue of *T-Frags* (#228) is **May 20th**. By the way, since the Chairman does not edit member columns, it may be a good idea to double-check them for typos before submitting them. For example, Larry Johnson's column this issue spelled **Fred Woodworth**'s name wrong. Nothing I can do about it on my end, except for pointing it out here. Also, whenever reviewing a non-UFO publication, it's a good idea to provide contact info (email or mailing address) so that readers can obtain the zine that is being discussed.

If any non-member reading this would like to **join the UFO**, the rules on how to join are in the **UFO Constitution** at the end of this issue. See you next issue!

-- Rob Imes,
UFO CHAIRMAN

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STRANGE FREQUENCIES

Opinions and Editorial by David Branstetter

I wanted to take this opportunity to say that's it's a real honor to be inducted into the UFO membership. It feels amazing to be a part of an outstanding group of peers who's mission is to encourage and support it's members. I tend to be opinionated and I've been know to speak my mind on more than one occasion. I hope that I can contribute to this group in a way that both fulfills my obligations and helps stimulate productive conversation. My conversations may include suggesting changes or asking tough questions to the artists involved on a project. I hope that no one sees my "digging" as an attempt to "dig " on anyone else. I feel like anyone who self publishes is my comrade in arms. I thank you for your support and I hope to learn from you as well.

Tales of Fantasy #60

What I think I enjoyed most about Tales of Fantasy was the solid story telling brought about by Larry Johnson doing the series for an astounding 60 issues. When looking at the book from an outsiders perspective I can't help but think that the issue would be nothing more than a standard spaceman and robot story. I was delighted to find that this was not the case. The characters felt like travel weary companions. There was something compelling about the way the characters interacted with each other that helped made them feel real.

The problem with doing a "it's too good to be true story" is that as audience members we're already thinking, "yeah but I know it's going to end bad". We're already trying to figure out which way it's going to go before the story gets going. "Hmmm... an abandoned zoo. This won't go well at all." I kept reading and again the story defied my expectations. I think my favorite part was the partial

Who Man videos left behind. I like how we discover what happens to the planet just as Jesse does. Around page 22 the pace really started to pick up and I was flipping the pages as fast as I could. I liked the sense of chaos portrayed.

Issue 60 is a good "done in one" story without needing 59 previous issues to understand the story. Although it would have been nice to see the characters reference their history or have them inform the audience of an ongoing plot so that it would feel like the characters would have an eventual final destination. "Lost In Space" often had the characters doing one thing while on the look out for the next thing. Even though they never went home it kept the audience anticipating the next move.

I liked how the story essentially worked with just two characters. That kind of isolation can be difficult to write. After all this time alone Jesse is able to keep a pretty upbeat attitude about the whole thing. It didn't seem forced. The adventure aspect of the book pushes the characters onward in a compelling way. I really hope Jesse eventually makes it back home.

Valiant Effort #3

One of the most difficult things about writing a superhero comic book from a Christian perspective is to make it believable and personable without coming across as cheesy. While I'm not quite sold on the premise that "God created an ancient superhero" I did find the main character pretty relatable. His conversion seemed pretty natural without being too preachy. This is probably more of a reflection of the personality of The Golden Protector's writers more than anything. They do a great job of setting up a relatable character. We've all endured loss and blamed God for it at one point in our lives. This conflict seems pretty natural and is definitely the most relatable aspect of the book. I wish the courtship of his girlfriend would have lasted longer. That conflict, while a convenient place to explain the benefits of Christianity, would have been more heartfelt if it had lasted a bit longer. Such a thing does happen in the real world and again that was one of the more enjoyable passages from this issue.

The most difficult transition occurred when the man became a superhero. It felt like the terror,

heartache, and conflict were gone. The Christianity angle adds a weird conflict because he discovers through his anger the strength and abilities of his costume. He's really torn from a moral standpoint as to what he should do. He also doesn't wonder about if the costume came from God or the Devil. He just assumes that it's a gift from God.

If it's not too late in the story I would suggest adding an element that the costume is ultimately a trap made by Satan. If used too much the Golden Protector believes that his own will is the source of power and not from God. Ultimately the character would become more dependent on himself and begin to ignore God. I think that conflict, being in love with his own power, could ultimately propel the comic and it's stories into some strange and dark territory.

The heroes journey always involves being brought down to a low point and finding the will to overcome it all. I commend Don Ensign and the other creators involved in the book for taking on such a controversial subject and trying to do something new with it.

Ditkomania #90

I just finished reading Ditkomania #90. It's my first entry into the larger world of Steve Ditko. I'm not as familiar with Ditko as I'd like to be and I only own a few collections of his work. Essentially he's a major influence of some of my major influences. Learning to appreciate Ditko seems like reading a history book in high school. I say that to emphasize that as a reader I'm not mesmerized by Ditko himself. Or maybe a better way to put it is that it hasn't developed into mania yet. The thing I enjoyed about Ron Frantz's Ditko memoir was that it was able to fill in some of my gaps over the history of comics and independent publishing. For instance I'd heard of the story of how Jerry Siegel was requesting independent publishers to take up interest on some undeveloped properties. I've only heard Dave Sim's version of events so it was nice to see the larger story in place. My favorite passages dealt with the precise descriptions of Ditko's clothes and apartment. Frantz's descriptions seemed to perfectly capture the milieu. Seeing how few photographs of Ditko exist, these descriptions help paint a better picture of the recluse.

Being a native Oklahoman I couldn't help to be proud of

all the places that Frantz had mentioned. I had no idea that Oklahoma had such a thriving comic book community.

I do disagree with Frantz's views toward Ayn Rand and how it has affected Ditko's life. Not that I'm a subscriber of that belief system it's just that the Black and White truth is almost always more beneficial in the end. I'm not saying that life has no room for compassion or generosity. I'm simply saying that single-minded dedication to one idea or belief over an extended period of time can bring about radical changes assisted by single-minded determination and commitment (this is not the ideal lifestyle for the lonely). For instance the 300 issue run of Cerebus would not have been possible if Dave Sim had simply said "Well times are tough and sales are dropping. Better quit now". No. He stuck with it through ups and downs, good times and bad. By doing so he was able to overcome all obstacles and obtain a monumental achievement in comic books. As a publisher, Frantz was never committed to seeing a larger project to the end. Granted he was able to develop a relationship with Ditko (to the envy of many), publish new Ditko material, and had the opportunity to live out some of his childhood fantasy. In that regard he was a runaway success. When the fun went away and reality crept back in it was easy to say, "There's no market for this work". I'm not being overtly harsh when criticizing Frantz. I'm speaking for the experience of being a self publisher for many years. The enjoyment ebbs and flows but the commitment to seeing my work to it's completion is always in the forefront of my mind. Essentially some people can say "I was there" and others can say "I did something". I'm in the position of straddling both of those worlds. At some point I'll have to make a decision to run to either side. I think one of the benefits from observing a man like Ditko is that we can see how that single-minded determination has had a lasting impact on pop culture. In a world where everyone is bending over backwards to "secure a sale" it's beautiful to see someone who brazenly takes the opposite approach. I think because of those principles Ditko's myth and legend will always remain.

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WHEN THE LEGEND BECOMES FACT... PRINT THE LEGEND.

– THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALENCE

COMIC CREATORS' COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT #2
JIM MAIN

Jim always puts together a slick-looking package, and the content here is solid as well. I like the format of a short interview/profile, followed by an excerpt from one of the person's comics...gives you a well-rounded view. Add in the extensive review section, and you really get a sense of a vibrant, active indy comics scene. On the other hand, Jim's editorial alludes to the flip side of all this energy and enthusiasm: the extreme difficulty in finding an audience in a cutthroat market that's dominated by a handful of corporate publishers. Keep fighting the good fight!

DITKOMANIA #90
ROB IMES

An unusual issue, taken up almost entirely by a single long essay by former comics publisher Ron Frantz. It's rambling, gossipy, and frequently detours into odd tangents. And yet, I found the whole thing fascinating. His firsthand account of his dealings with comics legends Jerry Siegel and Steve Ditko are neither sugar-coated nor unfairly hostile...it's a good reminder that even the most brilliant creator is still only human, each with their own perspective, quirks, and foibles. I was intrigued to learn that Ditko had actually gotten to meet his idol Ayn Rand...I'll bet that was an interesting conversation! It's a big chunk of text, but I'm glad Rob elected to run the whole thing. It's a corner of comics history that doesn't usually get much attention.

HCU CONFIDENTIAL #3
JASON BULLOCK

I'm a sucker for "behind the scenes" information, director's commentary, and the like. This is pretty dry, though, being mostly a recap of the series so far. We do get a brief comics segment, showing us what Michael Faraday was up to before he came to our world. But it's really just a fragment of a fight scene, filled with characters that look like they were lifted from a 1990s Image comic (I think it's supposed to be a parody? At least I hope so). I don't know...ancient gods vs. Dracula is such a wild, potentially fun premise, but I feel like Jason is just fussing around the edges, and meanwhile all the air is leaking out of the tires.

STRAW MAN #10
DAVID BRANSTETTER

Coming into the middle of a series is always tricky and, probably through no fault of David's, I had trouble wrapping my head around this story. Is Straw Man really a superhero, or just delusional? In the sequence with

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the woman in the bar, he seems completely disconnected from reality, but later in the police station, he's more lucid. He's alienated all his old friends, but it's not clear why. Not sure what to make of any of it. I like David's art, though...it has a loose, easygoing charm to it that's very appealing. Not too minimalist, not too overworked. I'm interested in seeing more of his work. Welcome to the club!

TALES OF FANTASY #60
LARRY JOHNSON

A terrific sci-fi yarn this issue. Not only is it clever and suspenseful on a plot level, it also resonates with deeper themes and metaphors. There's something very poignant about a planet full of machines that have outlived their purpose, desperately looking for a way to be useful again. Likewise, the robot invaders who turn up at the end are caught in an endless cycle of death, victims of their own programming. Only Dacto is strong-willed and flexible enough to transcend his programming and act out of loyalty and morality. His debate with Jesse about whether humans or machines were most to blame for the destruction of the planet is an interesting chicken-or-egg conundrum. It reminds me of that old joke, "To err is human...but to really screw up, you need a computer!" Larry's art is great, as always. The retro-styled robots and aliens give his work a classic quality that I really enjoy. Bold, clean linework, good use of solid black, and just a touch of stipple texture to add emphasis. Great stuff. That photo-montage back cover is a real eye-catcher as well.

IN OTHER NEWS...

Fantasy Theater #23 is done and at the printer. This is a bigger than normal issue (52 pages), so I decided to experiment by having it printed at Ka-Blam.com instead of my usual photocopying. I'm currently waiting on a sample copy, and if that looks good, I'll get copies out to you folks ASAP. This issue features a long Glorianna story that was previously seen on the web, and a brand-new Lady Spectra tale, guest-starring Steven Myers' hero Lizard Man. I think it's a solid issue, and as always, I look forward to your reactions.

I think that's everything for now. Keep making those comics!

- JKC -

SAM SEZ

An irregular column for the United Fanzine Organization's newsletter, TETRAGRAMMATON FRAGMENTS. Issued from Sam Gafford, 624 Metacom Ave., Warren, RI 02885. Email: lordshazam@yahoo.com

So here we are at the end of March, 2013, wondering if the winter will ever end. This has been one of the hardest March winters I can remember. But, as with all things, Winter will end and give way to Spring and the eventual Summer. So, too, does small press move through the seasons. With a new year, comes new books, new creators and new ideas. All of which we should be thankful for because, without this 'spring' of new creativity (from new *and* old quarters), small press would wither and be dust on the hot, humid winds of summer.

One of the things that I have been thinking of is whether the simple cost of producing a zine might be keeping people from publishing. The equation is simple: if one cannot afford to print a zine, then they will not publish and, eventually, move on.

I've had this conversation before on Facebook with several in our group and the general consensus was that I was wrong. At least one respondent mentioned how their printing costs were only half of the cover price of their zine. Sadly, I cannot say that this has been the case with me.

With virtually all of the zines I have published, I have lost money. Now, obviously, we don't do this for money. We do it because we love the medium and want to make our own contribution to it. However, as many will attest, few of us can afford to simply throw money away.

So I started thinking about doing a different kind of zine.

I'm at the stage where I am pretty much stopping my attempts at art. It takes me a long time to do art and I'm never all that thrilled with the results. So I started thinking about doing a different kind of zine. As some of you may know, I've recently

started doing a blog devoted to one of my favorite weird writers, William Hope Hodgson (1877-1918).

At present, I am up to 117 posts on the blog and it occurred to me that I'd like to publish some of them both to preserve them and to give them some bibliographic credit. However, when I laid out the publication (digest sized), it came to 56 pages with a card stock cover. A quick check with local copying stores (including Staples) resulted in a final cost of $180 (avg) for 50 copies. That's roughly almost $4 a copy.

I simply can't afford that for a zine that will have limited appeal and out of which I will probably only sell one or two copies.

So, this illustrates my question: will economics rather than technology render physical publishing obsolete? I could turn around and electronically publish my zine with no problem. It would have a wider potential audience and would cost me next to nothing.

And yet, and yet…

I'm an old fossil. I admit that. I like to hold a zine in my hands. I don't like having to sit at the computer or laptop or ebook reader or phone or whatever to read a zine. And then, of course, there's also the matter of permanence.

I don't have all that much faith in the internet to keep things for the future. Sure, it's great in terms of storage. You can save thousands of zines on a hard drive the size of a paperback book. And that's nice.

Maybe that's the way that small press needs to be heading. Maybe we need to be the trailblazers of this new frontier. Maybe the time of the printed zine has reached its end.

And yet, and yet…

I remember helping my brother, Carl, put together his fanzine, MINOTAUR, on the kitchen table of our house. I can still smell the duplicating fluid and feel the handle of the ditto machine turn in my hands. There was something about actually printing and collating and stapling by hand. Now, we send our zines to printing and copying companies and pick them up completely finished. And zines are drawn on the computer with no pencil ever touching paper.

I am a fossil and I've seen a lot. We've reached new levels of production to the point where some zines are published in higher quality than many comics of the 1960s. But I ramble. This is March, 2013, after all and there are some things that we cannot ignore and advances that cannot be taken back.

The Hodgson zine will be published in one form or another. Most likely it will be print and electronically. But the print version will be of a very small quantity because economics commands it.

And that makes me very sad.

All this wonder technology at our hands and we are limited by its cost. There's a great many things I could publish… but I cannot afford to. Dreams that cannot be dreamed because of the cost. Unless… the dreams change?

REVIEWS

TALES OF FANTASY #60 (Larry Johnson). Just when I think that the age of the classic zine is gone, Larry proves me wrong. It's this type of zine that keeps my hope alive. For years, Larry's been producing this title and every issue just seems to keep getting better and better.

This issue features a great Jesse Stuart story with script by Mike Tuz and plot & art by Larry. The story features Jesse and his robot friend, Dacto, finding a planet that appears to have been ravaged by nuclear war but which still has an interplanetary zoo that is maintained by robots.

To say more would be to give it away but this is a great SF story that echoes so many classic themes and yet remains its own. These are characters well known to Larry and Tuz and they show it in the ease of the script and dialogue.

I eagerly await every issue of TALES OF FANTASY because it is one of the best small press zines being published today. It shows me that it CAN still be done today and done well.

DITKOMANIA #90 (Rob Imes) I doubt if, when he took over this title, Rob ever imagined that it would still be going and only ten issues away from reaching issue #100! There are VERY few zines that can claim that milestone.

In this issue, Rob presents an article by Ron Frantz about his time as publisher of ACE Comics in the mid 80s. It is both insightful and illuminating.

This is the type of zine that we still need today. Although we are lucky enough to have magazines like ALTER EGO and BACK ISSUE, it was zines like this that were the backbone of comics scholarship and history. It's good to see that tradition maintained.

I've read a lot of articles and zines about comics. So many that I've forgotten quite a few of them. But this article was able to do something that isn't very easy these days: tell me something new.

This was the first issue that Rob did with a Kickstarter campaign which seems to have done rather well. Perhaps this is a model for the future? More avenues to explore?

HCU: CONFIDENTIAL #3 (Jason Bullock) This is a real old-time fanzine! A comic strip done with intensity and drive that promises more to come. It's pleasing to see Jason trying something this ambitious. I certainly couldn't do it these days. I've come to the conclusion that most serialized stories shouldn't be done in small press comics because there is no guarantee of them being finished (my own MONSTER WORLD is a good example of this). However, Jason is doing his best to prove me wrong and, in this case, I like being wrong.

Now, I do have a few caveats. I like the fact that a "the story so far" introduces the story but I did find it a bit confusing. Maybe it's my age but a lot of names and words being thrown about were hard for me to follow. Maybe something to indicate what issue each incident happened would help? Even if I'm a bit confused, I want to see where the story is going!

I did notice some spelling errors and, on page nine, the words "Comic p9" appear which I don't think were supposed to be there. I like the art but the action on that particular page is hard for me to decipher. I'm not exactly sure what's going on there and the one thing you want in a fight scene is clarity.

Jason's vision is very ambitious. I look forward to seeing him realize his vision.

STRAW MAN #10 (David Branstetter) This was David's applicant zine for the UFO and a very impressive one it is too! This is, in fact, one of the best produced zines I've seen in a while. The quality is top notch and features a great range of creators. If this is his introduction, then I can't wait to see what he has next!

I enjoy the Straw Man character and especially seeing him done by different creators. Sometimes it's refreshing to see something from a different perspective and David's got a great range of creators here.

I don't read many comic books these days. To be honest, I don't find much of anything that appeals to me in them. The themes and characters are, frankly, often very off-putting. I've also gotten tired of the comic companies endless 'revamping' and 'rebooting'. I have no interest in Marvel or DC anymore and I'd much rather read their comics from the 70s and 80s. There are a few independent comics that I pick up from time to time but nothing like the rabid reader I used to be.

Truly, I think part of it is that I'm completely sickened by the way Marvel & DC conduct themselves. Every day seems to bring a new instance of them mistreating creators or pissing on the memory of those who created their very industry. After all these years, the heirs of Kirby, Siegel & Shuster are still ignored or outright vilified. I can't even enjoy the new blockbuster movies because all I can think of is the injustice that is still being perpetuated.

When I was young, I wanted (more than anything) to work for Marvel or DC. Not anymore. I don't want to be part of a industry or culture that not only consumes their creators but blames them for letting them consumed in the first place.

--Sam

TALES OF THE UFO

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STRAW MAN #10: This is the first exposure I've had to David Branstetter's work and I find this publication ambitious, attractive and professionally produced. It's quite a package, and the cover design and color scheme work well. There's a nice balance of a purple/lavender color to the warm yellow/tan color and I like it.

Straw Man? He's certainly a peculiar character and intriguing. I must admit as I went along reading I just wondered what he was about? My first thought about the name "Straw Man" is that I believe this meant "fake man," or some kind of dummy set up as a decoy. That may be, but here it seems you have a detective, or an ex-detective who is obviously some kind of celebrity with a straw for a head? Was he some kind of mutant? Or perhaps it's a disguise, and if so how come he wears this on his head all the time, at the bar, at home?

There's some really good characterization and I can see that John has had complicated relationships, and these play out with his encounter with the woman in the bar – Ashlie. He doesn't remember her although she tells him they spend "five miserable years together?" Did something happen to him that affected his memory? I can tell this series has a lot of thought put into it, but I also feel I'm coming into the middle of something. I would suggest for new readers like myself, having a short paragraph in your opening editorial explaining who Straw Man is and how he got this way would be helpful.

At any rate this guy is having a tough life, thinking buying a new jacket will cheer him up, running into an "ex" he can't remember, visiting an old colleagues Eddie and Susan, who are planning to get married and the tense response to that. This is tough stuff and it's handled pretty well as presented in this story. There's a lot of dramatic staging of this action in the three stories. The art style is different on the first chapter, in pencil it seems. And it appears that David has used Photoshop effects for creating a dimensional sense to good effect as well.

All of the guest starring artists' work is quite enjoyable and makes this into a generally satisfying anthology zine. Blair Kitchen's "The Possum" for example seems like something you'd see on Cartoon Network. It has that frenetic energy to it, and Blair does a good job with this concept. James Smith's "Mr. Monkey Bags" was ambitious, a little rough around the edges but that adds to its charm. And sometimes jumpy in the storytelling I thought. There's some good pacing and use of close ups in this story at strategic moments. A love/hate relationship?

I think Richard Jenkins has a very attractive cartoon style. He utilizes a jaunty drawing style with the realism of light and shadow. It's a bit like Will Eisner and a bit like Rockwell Kent in it's almost "woodcut" like inking style. "Black Sam" was a beautifully produced little strip and I'd like to see more long form tales from this artist, because he can handle a historical scenario like this so well.

I think this is the first Max Ink work I've seen since his "Amoeba Adventures" days, and this is a short but sweet little tale, a blink. I think the ending was perfect. You had this great build, the argument of the futility of it all, killing the world, and then "so … who wants to go swimming?" That was the perfect twist! And I love that image of the gal splashing about in the ocean in the final panel.

Mike Kitchen's "Comics Are Dead" was a professionally produced bit of op-ed! Pirates, barbarians and fat cats all in one strip! "Stuck In the Middle" – I can see you two had a good time doing this one. When two creators come up with a collaborative project that works the results are very nice as is the case here. The Psychedelic Tangerine reminds me of The Joker and that may have been intentional.

Brian Payne's little Bible reading strip is arranged almost exclusively in bust shots, a simple direction of the players in the quote offset by the sitting Midnight Angel. And

the inking was perfect.

Steve Peters' Sparky was fun too, and a unique collaborative effort once again.

Tom Scioli's five pages Kirby inspired slugfest is well staged and easy to follow. I like the full page next to the six-panel layout. I can see this is set up for color with all the gray tones. I understand this is an excerpt from a longer story and I'd like to see the build up prior to this fight scene. I must say I am very impressed that there's no dialogue, which might be more realistic than Stan Lee words decorating all the action!

I find David's in-between little write-ups about his relationship with all the contributing creators a nice tying factor for this book. It gives it a personal edge, enough information but not too much. This kind of element I feel adds to the entire product, because an anthology like this shouldn't just be a random collection of material – there has to be a tying theme, tenuous though it may be.

Throughout there is a sense of professionalism and I nary found a typo in the whole book! Welcome to the UFO, David.

HCU: CONFIDENTIAL #3: Boy, the cover has a handsome color scheme, light and pastel in hue and it depicts Dracula and bats! It's a nice combination of colors. This book, when I went through it, felt like a high school textbook, and that's not to say it's a bad thing. Jason feels that his Central Hero Universe series needs this kind of annotation. Readers have questions and he answers them here. It's well produced and informative, but my criticism would be that this kind of thing almost violates the "show me/don't tell me" rule.

Jason is very good at explaining the history and the character's motives in his long epic tale, and there have been some individual adventures that I have enjoyed on my own. I would suggest that this kind of essay could be applied in the main comic book as a short paragraph on the inside front cover of each issue. It would be much like the "What has gone before" text you would see on the old time movie serials: "When last we saw the Green Hornet and Kato they were lured into an abandoned garage by Kingpin Louie, a ruthless mobster ..." And then, work on incorporating this feeling in the stories themselves, and that's a delicate balance; to give the readers a sense of who these people are and what the situation is without being too heavy-handed.

I am working on this same sort of presentation in my "Hand" series. I'm all for an epic sense, a novelistic sense to each chapter, and I think for the most part it has worked in Jason's work. I will admit there are times I am a bit lost, and you have to avoid "*see issue #4" to really give each episode enough of a foundation to stand on its own. There's a subtle balance in writing that requires enough information to get interested in it first, and then to continue reading the story because you want to find out what will happen next.

I have to say that the "Why Did You Do That?" essay reminded me of "Most Frequently Asked Questions" on a Website. I wonder if citing the actual questions Jason gets from his readers, in the form of letters would add a personal touch here. It seems a little sterile, though informative.

Now I know Jason wrote an essay last time about giving and taking constructive criticism and that's my intention here. I really liked the little Wiki-Myths page about Sinbad The Sailor, and the comic featuring The X-Delta Team was nice although I'd like to see it laid out in a vertical fashion for easier reading.

It's obvious by reading this publication that Jason really takes a scholarly approach to his work. And that's a good thing, and I do too. A radical suggestion is that Jason incorporates a responsive letters column in each issue of Central Hero Universe, therefore giving the book a more thoughtful read (right at the time you are reading it) but that might not be the format he wishes for his comic book.

This is a top-notch publication in regards to presentation and printing. It's an adjunct to CHU of course. It's good to have Jason in the UFO because he's an exam-

ple of someone who takes his craft very seriously and I can tell he wants to do the best job he can with this series that liberally and entertainingly borrows from ancient myths!

DITKOMANIA #90: The UFO's top fanzine reaches its 90th issue with a winning essay by Ron Frantz. I love the cover! I would like to see this in color. This is Ditko's interpretation of the Golden Age Daredevil pitted against the nefarious Claw! One wonders these days how a story featuring a "yellow peril" villain would play!

"Walking In The Footsteps of Giants" was an engaging read from beginning to end, and it was an interesting departure from the shorter articles one usually finds in Ditkomania. At once it took both a scholarly look at comics history and Ron Frantz's personal involvement with some of the industry's most noted creators in his Ace Comics endeavors in the 1980s. I have an issue of Cosmic Comics and recall how much I enjoyed Pat Boyette's contribution. Here Ron details the methods of big time publishers like Martin Goodman and his own fledgling efforts. Money! That's what it takes to run the business, and how do you justify that with "art?" That is the question.

I really liked the revelation that perhaps Martin Goodman was dictating the changes in the Spiderman concept that led to Ditko's departure. Too often Stan Lee has been cast as the villain in this tale. When you consider the compromise that Goodman took to employ DC Comic's distribution group in the 1960s (there was a limit put on the number of titles until 1968 so Marvel would not compete unduly on the shelves with DC) you can get an understanding of the wheeling and dealing that went on behind the scenes.

A truly interesting and even shocking revelation was the story of Jerry Siegel contacting Ron Franz for work! What a team-up it would have been had Ditko gone through with the illustration of this Ooky and Zooky strip!

The most peculiar story regarding this time was Tom Hall's claim (from Elite Comics) that he received some scripts from Siegel that were infested with fleas! Indeed! If this tale were true I certainly wouldn't get rid of the scripts. A liberal shaking them outdoors would do the trick. This recollection gives you the impression of an eccentric character living in clutter, but I'm a bit suspect about the validity of it.

Mr. Frantz's story of going to New York to Ditko's studio was the high point of this essay I felt. I loved his description of driving through the streets near Times Square, indeed back then it was truly a seedy place. And then Mr. Ditko welcomes him into his studio, not a person inclined to offer comforts to his visitors. This is his workspace and as such, serves only his needs (only one chair for example).

Mr. Ditko is dedicated to the teachings of Ayn Rand and a proponent of the objectivist philosophy, this is well known, and evidenced here by Mr. Franz's observations in the studio.

He brings up the fan criticism of Mr. Ditko's lifestyle and his reaction to that criticism. Artists are varied individuals and some of them are connected to society in more involved ways than others. And even though Mr. Ditko sits on a "gold mine" of his original art he chooses to keep it to himself and that's his prerogative. He has chosen a solitary life, and this life in many ways represents the stereotypical image of the artist, apart from society, yet in the role of social commentator. Compare this life with that of Joe Kubert's; he was a family man who set up a cartoonists school with his children, in order to teach the craft of telling stories in comics form. But there's the difference. Mr. Kubert was into teaching others the craft of storytelling, to comics artists with their own message. Mr. Ditko, on the other hand, has his own message to tell, and is intensely concentrated on telling that message in his works.

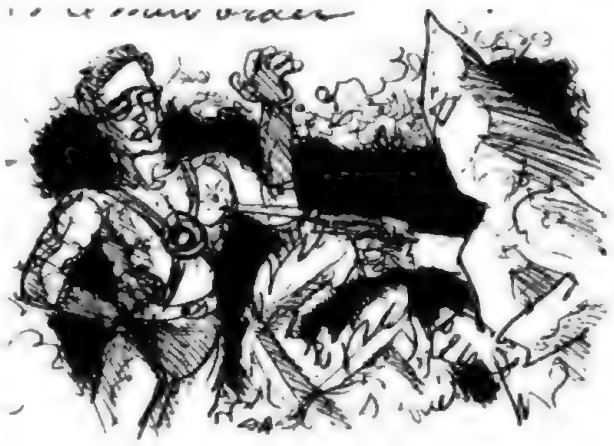
I must say Mr. Frantz's opinion that Steve Ditko will be seen as one of the most influential artists of the 20th century is certainly food for thought. Consider you have an artist like Jackson Pollock who set the art world on its ear, but that's a rarified clique of "fine art" but in the world of comics you have

a mass appeal, and that's where Ditko comes in, having been a student of Jerry Robinson's (from Batman fame) and a shaper of the horror scene of the 1950s to the ubiquitous Spiderman, and then to Mr. A and beyond. There seems to be no lukewarm reaction to Ditko's work, you either like it or you don't. This is the mark of an individual artist, and he has not compromised. I can see from Mr. Franz's dealings with Steve Ditko that he attempted to appeal to the artist's sensibilities in producing material that was best suited for him. And that makes sense, because he will do the best job with that kind of material.

I enjoyed seeing all the "magic types" Ditko sketched out for the proposed Siegel collaboration. It's as if Dr. Strange was taken to cartoon-y levels.

This issue, mostly composed of this one long essay was an excellent read, and having been a life long comics fan I am always interested in finding out information from behind the scenes that contributed to this medium I enjoy so much. Thank you Rob for consistently keeping up with this high quality publication.

THE MYSTERY & ADVENTURE SERIES REVIEW: I've been enjoying a bit of correspondence with Fred Woodword, publisher of this title. He had sent a sample copy to all UFO members last time, and I've sent him a few issues of Tales of Fantasy. He responded with a nice letter plus two more issues - #45 and #37. From cover to cover these are great reads, and an example of the fine kind of commentary that was common back before the Internet came along. Fred and all of his writers, even the letters column contributors give great thought to their words, and not only discuss the hobby of collecting juvenile fiction but their lives' experiences. One of the most engaging essays for example was in issue #45: "Hunting For Hidden Books" by Kent Winslow. Mr. Winslow recounts his true-life adventures as a boy moving from town to town having been kidnapped by a man, and his secret relationship to reading and books. Wow! If you haven't checked out Mr. Woodword's publication you are missing something really great! He accepts donations, no checks, just money for each issue. I'd suggest $3.00 per issue. Fred Woodword, P.O. Box 3012, Tucson, AR 85702.



ODDS AND ENDS: Rob Imes is doing a fine job as chairman of this group. And I was thrilled to see Jason Bullock's cover illustration of my character The Hand! And thanks to all who said such kinds things about this new concept. Be informed that Tales of Fantasy #61 will feature chapters three and four in this new series.

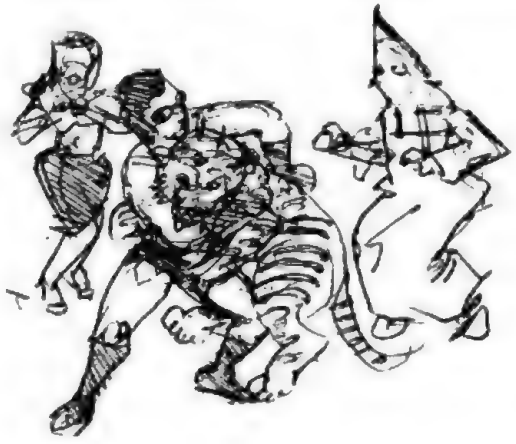
Don Ensign's essay on Randy Reynaldo's Rob Hanes was very well done. Randy was a great member of the UFO some years ago and has always been committed to a professional sense of storytelling in his comic book. I've admired his work for a long time. His art has a unique style, yet harkens to the great comic strip illustration of ages ago, and I might even add Roy Crane's work on Buz Sawyer as an influence, another adventure comic in this same genre.

Jason Bullock writes a nice piece on giving constructive criticism and no truer words have been spoken. A lot of times I get polar opposite responses to my work from different people, but sometimes someone points out an aspect of my drawing or storytelling that needs work, and you know what? Often that issue has been in the back of my mind and someone perceptive enough addresses it and I say, "Aha! Thank you!" It takes some seasoning to take positive and negative criticism. And I must say in my experience working with young people in my comic book class I am really well aware of this. I always see something promising in a young student's work and encourage them, focusing on their strengths (like someone doing

well with their figures but lacking backgrounds) and helping them with making the product better. But then there are times when I find someone's approach different from my own. For example one student was working on his page of this character going though all his actions and I asked "Where is he? Where are the backgrounds?" He replied, "I haven't drawn them yet!" And sure enough he went back and put them in. Hmmm! I would have put in the background panel by panel, but this kid was doing it this way, and I found that rather freeing; you could go back and forth in the temporal sense in creating your story. And his finished story was pretty good too!

I read with great interest the responses Rob Imes got from Science Fiction Fandom publishers. There were views all the way from snobbery to openness. "... as most of we fanzine publishers ... regard SF fanzines as the real McCoy, and comics fanzines as merely a sidestream." Indeed! Oh, I see, you have the Orthodox Religion and the Protestants! Well, there's a mindset here that I couldn't even begin to penetrate, and I'm darn glad I don't share it.

Rob related how he used my "Bart Rover" text series in Tales of Fantasy as an example of science fiction-related material. That was in defense, but there's something else going on here. For one thing science fiction is a GENRE and comic books are a MEDIUM. Hence, science fiction stories can show up in prose fiction, TV, movies, and in comics, and audio recordings. And get this, in my estimation; the majority of the stories in the last 20 issues of Tales of Fantasy have been in the science fiction GENRE even though the titles has "fantasy" in it, there's very little of that GENRE in TOF. "The Skin Game," "Tibero," "Eryx," "The Bionic Boy," "The Image Oscillator," "A Line In The Sand" to name a few. Yes, they have all been in the comics medium but they are science fiction stories in the classic sense!



At the risk of bragging a reader of TOF #60's "A Day At The Zoo" said it had an "Asimov feel" to it.

When I was 14 I was reading Ray Bradbury and buying IF Science Fiction Magazine, and the next year I joined the Science Fiction Book Club and still read Spiderman, Ghostly Tales and Magnus Robot Fighter comic books.

Then lets think of the history of science fiction "fandom." Back in the 1930s there were two young fellows from Ohio named Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster who had a text piece featuring a "superman" character printed in a science fiction fanzine. Well, gee, whatever happened to them?

OK, then there's this term, "Fanzine" too. What is a fanzine? Does every title published by UFO members come under this banner? The only real "fanzines" currently published are Rob Imes' Ditkomania (for fans of Ditko) and Tune In (for fans of old time radio). Then you have the comics publishers, and then again their publications (not only my own TOF) have featured text stories as well.

How on earth did the UFO gain a reputation of being a strict comics-oriented coop? Even in the BPP days of 40 years ago I know that publications like Minotaur featured text fiction. I'll bet if I dig into my aging memory banks I could come up with some text fiction titles from that time too, and some of them in the "science fiction genre." And then you have my book "The Comet". Yes, it started out as primarily a comics-oriented fanzine, but soon branched out to many interests. We had a regular column on Ray Bradbury, and articles on the pulp Shadow stories, the history of Walt Disney Studios, The Six Million Dollar Man, and my own Big Band Review.

I was reminded of this when I read Rob's statement about readers of Ditkomania becoming aware of old time radio by seeing the listing of Tune In on the UFO checklist. Lately I've been listening to episodes of old radio shows like Suspense and X Minus One on You Tube when I'm drawing at home. And I am fascinated by the use of language, voice inflection and sound effects to evoke

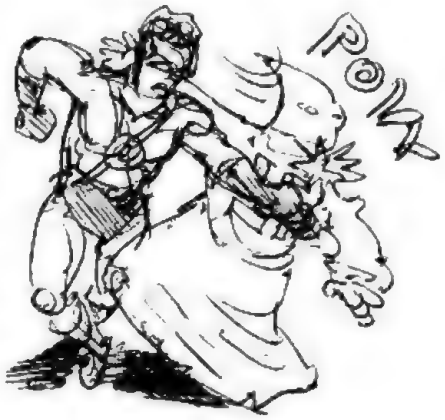
not only the action the sense of place. This is so interesting for a writer, and listening to these stories helps my own storytelling.

Yep, at the same time I'm reading old SF digests from 40-50 years ago plus comics. Crossover, two camps? Well, there was a time I didn't pay much attention to newspaper comics because I was in the rarified world of "comic books" but now I am a big fan of Calvin and Hobbs and Blondie. So, interests can evolve, and reading the little bit about the comic strip in the SF fanzine Broken Toys shows there's hope for an opening up here, at least a little bit. And as for the others who are locked up in their exclusive interests (and it works both ways for those who like comics too) let them stay there.

There's also the issue of on-line publications getting very little response as opposed to print publications. That's a whole other bag of beans. And small as the UFO is there's at least an active critical response to your work. I'm glad to see that each columnist in the last issue of the newsletter took the time and effort to respond to each other's publications. We can learn and grow from each other and that's why I'm here.

WORLD WIDE WEB: It's ensnared practically everyone these days, hasn't it? Well, maybe not everyone! We sure live in a science fiction world where you can reach anyone, anytime, anywhere in the world. Dick Tracy's two-way wrist radio has become a reality.

One very nice experience I had recently was appearing on Dan Burke's "Art Studio" podcast. We get on the telephone, and I start up a little MP3 recorder, and then after we chat for about an hour or so I send off the recording via the Internet to Dan, he puts it together with his own recording and makes this podcast available. He really picked my brain about my art approach on Tales of Fantasy #59's "The Hand" this time and of course we tangent off to other art-type discussions. And I mentioned the influence of the "50 Panels And How They Work" book that Dan, Mike Tuz and I collaborated on this past year which is now available on Amazon. This is a print-on demand book.



And that brings me to The Best of Tales of Fantasy Vol. 1. I've been busy scanning in pages and formatting them for this 200-page trade paperback that will be available on Amazon. Dan is helping me with this since he has a lot of experience with this kind of publishing.

Then we've been talking about making this publication available as on on-line product as well. Just because I'm not comfortable reading comics on the screen doesn't mean others aren't and once they are in PDF form, why not?

And he's been convincing me that for future issues of Tales of Fantasy I just don't have to do a photocopied version; there can be an Amazon print-on-demand version as well. This makes sense. And even though the prospect of sales in this vast sea of Internet information is dim, it's a good idea to have this out there for those who want it.

And let me mention that Mike Tuz has a book on Amazon now entitled "A Passage In The Darkness" featuring his fiction, with cover art by me, plus a reprint of the strip, "A Line In The Sand" from TOF #55. Yep, we're all entering this science fiction world of the Internet and publishing! He even offers an e-book download of the title story.

I've enough material, and now it's time to archive it in this format. That doesn't mean by any means that I am stopping producing! I am obsessed! And I'm busy writing and drawing new stories all the time. Stay tuned!

ZERO MAN: Interspersed throughout my column are little thumbnails I did for to accompany my script for my faux Golden Age superhero Zero Man. Larry Blake did the illustrations and utilized my sketches as a guide. Someday I'll put out this issue as a print on demand book on Amazon. The original appeared in Tales of Fantasy #47.

That's it. Keep on publishing, my fellow UFOers! Best wishes to everyone!

The Ensign Report #7 (March 2013) UFO Edition.

Comments and opinions by Don Ensign. Published in Tetragrammaton Fragments #227 ©2013 Don Ensign

1st Anniversary: With this issue I'm beginning my second year with UFO and *T-Frags*. I appreciate all of you who have made me feel at home and the helpful comments of my work and also hopefuly the helpful comments I've given on your work.
Projects: I've scheduled the 4th issue of ***Valiant Efforts*** for May so you should see some more adventures of the Golden Protector and Street Fury this Spring. I've also worked on the first issue of *The Blue Boy Chronicles* a 48-page magazine devoted to the Fawcett era Captain Marvel Jr. Now my proofing editors have it and it should be published in the not too distant future.
Reviews: This time around I'm reviewing only one specific UFO pub but with *50 Panels and Why They Work!* we have a current UFO member, a recent UFO member and a UFO fan getting together for an ambitious comic s critiquing session. Also the *Self Publisher Magazine* produced by Ian Shires is noteworthy on several fronts not the least being that Ian was UFO chairman some 20 years or so ago.
Welcome: I'll take this opportunity to welcome new member David Branstetter to UFO and *T-Frags*. Hopefully I'll have a review of David's application zine, *Straw Man* #10 next issue.

50 Panels And How They Work by Dan Burke, Larry Johnson and Mike Tuz (2012). Here are the things I like about this book. Great concept, beautiful design, delivered on the premise presented. Dan Burke discusses in his introduction what this book is and what it isn't. He mentions that these aren't necessarily the greatest panels ever drawn in comic books. While the title says 50 panels there are actually 51 numbered panels and 137 images. For example, under silhouette there are 27 images and under The Art of Conversation there are 19 images. Burke defines the book as a "talk" or "chat" not a "lecture" or "text book" however all three of the reviewers give excellent insights into why the panels under discussion function well and get their story telling job done. Burke does acknowledge the limitations of just examining one panel taken out of its narrative context. There are example of several panels, even some complete pages that show the story context. Dan mentions that "The three authors have a life-long love of making comics and practicing the form." These are good credentials and each reviewer supplies abundant analytical proof of that "life-long love."
Each reviewer has a unique voice and the compliment each other well. Mike does good analysis of how specific visual elements of the panel interact with each other. Larry makes some valuable comparison to fine artist such as Edgar Degas. Dan Burke does a number of diagrammed panels showing force lines/arrows that depict the eye motion trajectory the artist drew into the picture. Perhaps the most interesting discussions take place when Mike, Larry and Dan disagree with each other. The charm of the old Siskel & Ebert motion picture review TV program was when the reviewers got into

"fights/arguments" with one another over specific technical or thematic aspects of a specific movie. Larry shows his stuff when he denounces many of the "silhouette" panels as "Ridicilous, "even offensive," "corny", "kind of weird", "Awful,", "absolutely stupid" and other descriptors. Mike, ever the peacemaker, comes to the rescue by saying Larry looks at these samples with a "literal" eye where he sees them "as abstract devises for creating visual contrast or setting mood..."
Perhaps the most insightful series of panels and analysis was the conversation section (pp. 134-150) where the three critics each pointed out often subtle visual cues that made each panel emotionally successful. Most of the panels are from an EC story penciled by Johnny Craig. Larry compared these "quiet" talking head panels (yet they convey emotions very well) with a Degas family portrait masterpiece, the Bellini Family (p. 150).
Most of the examples were from 1945 to 1960. With the exception of the Steranko panel, several panels from the obscure mid-1960s short-lived Harvey super heroes and some equally obscure examples from 1940s Harvey and Quality Comics most of the panels seem to be from the 1950s. The most frequent reoccurring example is from the EC science fiction story "Down to Earth" by Wally Wood. Jack Kamen and Jack Davis also receive some very deserved attention. There are also panels from the work of Matt Baker, Joe Orlando, Russ Heath, Jack Sparling, Norman Maurer and uncredited humor cartoonists who worked on strips like Harvey's Little Audrey and others.
There is no Alex Raymond, no Milton Caniff, no Harold Foster, no Roy Crane, no Lou Fine, no Will Eisner, no Jack Kirby, no Steve Ditko, no Harvey Kurtzman, no Alex Toth, no Joe Kubert, no Mort Meskin, no Gil Kane, no Carmine Infantino, no Russ Manning, no John Buscema, no Jess Marsh, no Frank Frazetta, no Al Williamson, no Angelo Torres, no Bernie Krigstein, no Carl Barks, no CC Beck, no Walt Kelly and none of the guys who've drawn comics since 1968 like Bernie Wrightson, Mike Kaluta, John Bryne, Richard Buckler, Dave Cockrum, Don Newton, Jim Lee, Jim Starlin, Barry Windsor-Smith, Dave Gibbons, Jerry Ordway, Frank Miller, George Perez, Brian Bolland and not any of the current generation like Alex Ross, Steve Epting, Gary Franks, Dan Jurgens, Aaron Lopresti, Ivan Reis, Ethan Van Sciver and many, many others.
My suggestion is to publish a "Son of 50 Panels" and tackle examples from the masters of the medium like those mentioned above. Now that our three reviewer amigos have sharpened their analytical knives on the relative obscure (Wally Wood being excepted) it is time for them to launch into the main course.
Nitpick: The comic book/story where the panel examples were taken from was not indicated. The name of the comic, issue number, year published, would have been helpful. Also there was spotty reference to who the artists were.

Self Publisher Magazine #59 (Oct. 2012)
Thanks to recently departed member Dan Burke I found out that Ian Shires was a former UFO chairman. Ian is now putting out called *Self Publisher Magazine* (perhaps this is a revival).
First interview with Everett Soares, creator of *Sky Pirates*. Ian Shires gives a thorough introduction to Sky Pirates of Valendor before launching into a brief interview with the writer Evereet Soares. This is a good bio, book intro and interview. There are several pages of *Sky Pirates* comic (humanoid animal buccaneers) that follow with very good art by Brian Brinlee and Alex Rivera. Next is an informative interview with Moonstone Book's Tim Lasiuta by Amy Letts. This is a well done *PR* interview. Moonstone publishes prose anthologies as well as comic books from licensed properties like Zorro, Green Hornet, The Lone Ranger, Honey West, the Avenger and so on. Lasiuta is specific on what the company is trying to accomplish, who their readership is and what they want to do in the future. Next up is an interview with Darren Worrow a British writer, cartoonist, illustrator and designer. Ellen Fleisher, *Self Publisher* copy editor conducts an interview with Worrow where he discusses his childhood introduction to comics, his teen years and early projects like *Toonedelic Times* and current offerings like the *Hex Factor*. Worrow output seems to be primarily in the horror genre. Next up is Ian Shires discussing the state of small press distribution. This is a helpful article the only shortcoming is it not comprehensive in the sense that all the information needed by the

author was not forth coming for the article deadline. Some of his distributor contacts were too late or did not respond to his queries. However Shires makes a good attempt to cover this important subject with discussions of DriveThru Comics, Ka-Blam and others. Next Jennifer Walker reports on two Kickstarter campaigns and gives advice on how to develop a successful Kickstarter campaign. Next up is an interview with Ohio musician/comic book artist Brian Latimer. Jay Savage gives some good advice on how to interact with the public in "Presenting Yourself".

Following this is a short letter column and several pages of a manga-style/teenage band web comic called "Sparkshooter" by Troy Brownfield and Sarah Vaughn. Following this are more pages of comic samples including "Glyf" by Marshall Couture, "Veggie Dog Saturn!" by Jason Young and *Surprising Comics* by Mark Davis and Stuart Berryhill. This is followed by a short story "The Last Great American Salesman" by Daniel Nathan Horn and the issue is concluded by a small press comics review section (works by the late Luisa Felix and Jim Main are included). Most of the short reviews are done by publisher Shires.

This issue of *Self Publisher* does contain helpful information (the distribution and Kickstarter articles and a sampling of small press comics circa late 2012). Even though the layout is somewhat clunky ("serviceable" is the term Shires uses) *Self Publisher Magazine* delivers the goods and it is a free download pdf.

(Hopefully I'll review *Self Publisher Magazine* #60 in the next issue of *T-Frags*.)

Tales of Fantasy #60 January 2013, Larry Johnson.

This issue again deals with the adventures of the planet-hopping Jesse Stuart. Larry and Mike Tuz decided to have Stuart set down on a new planet rather than continuing the storyline from *TOS* #55. Apparently Jesse escaped the embrace of the plant woman. With this story I am getting a fix on what Johnson (and Tuz) are trying to do with the character. Back in my column in *T-Frags* #224 I mentioned that my ideas concerning comic book science fiction were heavily influenced DC's *Strange Adventures* (plus *Mystery in Space*) and the EC science fiction comics. I believe that Jesse Stuart fits well within the basic assumptions of these comic book predecessors. Sometime ago I got the first volume of DC *Showcase Presents: Strange Adventures* which is filled with short graphic stories (6 to 7 pp) from 1955-56. Many of these stories centered on a single normal human protagonist using his intelligence and wits to solve sci fi problems from alien invasions and other world threatening dilammas. In 1958 Julius Schwartz and Gardner Fox created Adam Strange. Adam was the "thinking man's " hero. In each story he was transported by the Zeta beam to the planet Rann where every time he confronted a menace which he defeated by quick ingenuity and mental resourcefulness. His incentive to make so many trips to Rann was the be with the beautiful Alanna (later wife).

While it seems clear that Jesse Stuart owes some debt to these earlier characters the basic assumptions for Jesse's new planetary adventures goes back much further at least to the 8th century BC. The poet Homer write the post-Iliad adventures of the wandering hero, Odysseus (or Ulysses). At the conclusion of the Trojan War Odysseus embarked on a 10-year journey back to his home land and the arms of his beloved wive Penelope. During this sea voyage Odysseus encountered many perils as he went from island to island including Circe the witch who turned men into pigs, the giant Cyclops and the entrancing Sirens. Likewise Jesse Stuart

travels from planet to planet where he encounters various adventures and trials during his quest to return to Earth. Since I have arrived late to these tales I don't know if Jesse has a Penelope to return to or not. If so she doesn't seem to weight too heavily on his mind.

Johnson's art style in some ways resembles the early DC stories. The power of Johnson's art is that it is very clear and simply and he incorporates skillful panel-to-panel layouts into the narrative. The over all inking is fairly light and airy similar to these old *Strange Adventures* yarns. There are other artistic nods to classic artists. The Dacto robot with his caterpillar tracks reminds one of some of the robots Russ Manning devised for *Magnus Robot Fighter*. The anti "who man" black plated robot was similar to Gort from the original "The Day the Earth Stood Still" movie. Their ships resembled black chocolate Kisses.

There are several themes run through this story. One is the philosophy of the destructiveness of man. This destructiveness ended in the annihilation of all human life on the planet and even guaranteed that if humans should again set foot on this world they would also be destroyed. A very harsh and chilling moral tale indeed. Another theme is the loneliness of Jesse Stuart. Stuart only wants to get back to his home on Earth. This also reminds one of the theme of *Star Trek: Voyager*. This loneliness theme is reflected in Dacto, Stuart's companion robot who along with artificial intelligence must have some programmed emotions. Dacto, though unwilling to admit it, was even looking for robot companionship. The issue of cloning an entire race from Stuart is raised much to his consternation.

This story brings forth a host of meaty issues. Perhaps the different between those old DC tales which were symbols of humanistic modernism and self-sufficiency Stuart seems to go with the flow of the story and more or less "lucks out" rather than discovers the solution, by his own wisdom and acumen, to the problem at hand. While I again can't agree with, at least my perception of the philosophical message, it was presented in a much more subtle manner than in the previous Jesse Stuart story (*TOS* #55). Perhaps in some ways the conclusion of this story resembles the often downbeat endings many of the old early 1950s EC yarns from *Weird Science* and *Weird Fantasy*.

Bio-Speak 7

As mentioned in prior Bio-Speaks as a child my family took frequent trips from our home in northwest Washington to visit relatives in western Colorado. My family was a church-going family and on these trips we visited churches attended by my relatives. One congregation in Delta, Colorado I have memories of was the First Baptist Church. This church gave out take home Sunday School

papers to the kids called Sunday Pix published by David C. Cook. Perhaps the most significant thing about Sunday Pix was they serialized the Bible in comic strip form. I later found out that the art was done by Andre LeBlanc. This art set a high standard in comic strip adaptations of the Bible. LeBlanc worked with Will Eisner (on the Spirit) and was well know for a comic strip called "Intellectual Amos" (in Quality's National Comics). The Sunday Pix Bible strips were later collected into book form called the Picture Bible. On several occasions I got permission from David C. Cook to use Picture Bible art for a magazine I designed for a faith based non profit I worked for in the 1980s and 1990s. Several years ago comic artist and former Kubert School instructor Sergio Cariello redid the art and it is now called the Action Bible which sells very well at comic conventions.

"Villainy In Depth and other Deep Subjects"

By Jason Bullock
3/18/2013

While working on my newest release of *Hero Central Confidential* #3, I had a question posed to me as to why I used Dracula as the primary antagonist of my series. It took a moment or two to really coalesce my thoughts on that question. At first , I wanted to say that he is probably one of the most recognized villainous character associated with darkness, well next to the devil himself. I stopped myself and thought some more about what did I find really enjoyable about involving this ancient archetype into the mix. It hit me. He is as flawed a character as any of the heroes in the series. So I explained what I meant at that point.

Once you have defined the needs of your character, as protagonist or antagonist, you no doubt have already created the character with a fleshed out persona, history, archetype, etc. After adding specific characteristics like gender, age, and emotional state to act or interact with others around him, don`t forget to give him some attitude. Fleshing out characters with personality allows the readers the opportunity to identity or even connect personally with the character. Quirky flaws, modified behavior and even obsessive compulsive requirements can ground the character`s actions into more of a realistic depth of the story. I always add such depth to my character`s, especially villains, by focusing on the fears, weaknesses, motives, and secrets. I like to have the character, hero or villain, emulate dialects and mannerisms from people that I have encountered. Once I know who the antagonist or villain is going to be in my work, I start to needle away to the core of the individual. Its important to determine how he fits into the grand scheme of things. Is he a bump in the road or a mountain to circumvent? To what degree does he display his position in the work? Specific genres work better with aptly chosen opponents. In my *Hero Central Universe* series, Dracula, A Vampyre, his undead minions, twisted mortal scientists and Umbral Warriors all cry out for a shadowy hierar-

chal element of what the protagonists are up against. Despite it all, Dracula was human once. His loves, competitions, legacy all were responsible for the obligations that led him to become undead. Those traumatic elements of his life left him to his own devices. Dracula`s old weaknesses were exploited by his opponents in the past but those same basic weaknesses have been used to outwit him time and again. The character`s vulnerabilities, while often shielded from prying eyes abroad, will again undo this character`s machinations. It is this particular flaw that reminds us the Dark General of the Army of Blood had a beating heart at one time in his life.

Villains drive the story. Without the villain, the hero can not overcome obstacles and expand his own development in the story. One important thing to remember is that the more evil and threatening a villain is, the more evil his plans will unfold to become. Don`t always make the villain fail. A villain is not always totally evil. Villains should have some redeeming positive qualities spread out among his attributes. Don`t just seek to kill off villains even if they deserve it. Uncertainty is the villain`s best cloak and dagger maneuver. All these components added together over the character`s own mythology made Dracula the perfect antagonist for me. That`s why I chose him to play the lead role in my own little world play stretched across the stage.

This month of March allowed me the opportunity to send to the printers the new double sized issue of *HeroCentral Universe* 8-9. Forty-four pages long, this issue will give every reader more content of the story as the tapestry is unveiled. In the meantime, I mailed out *HCU: Confidential* #3 to the UFO-ers. This issue actually has a teaser comic, well part one anyway, of who Michael Faraday truly is in his world of Parallel Earth. Maybe he`s not just a jerk boyfriend that we came to know. This issue also sports another Wiki-Myth story. Its Sinbad`s turn under the spotlight from Wikipedia. More interview questions and behind the scenes story zingers round out the issue. I hope everyone enjoys their copy.

In the POBox....I found the latest issue of *Ditkomania*, #90 to be exact. This issue is dedi-

cated to Ron Frantz`s encounters, memories, and affectations of working with Steve Ditko. Mr. Frantz`s exposition on his communications with Ditko are encouraging that the publishing world despite its reputation can indeed have humane members within it. I found Mr. Frantz` personal encounter somewhat profound. His description of meeting that Type A, work-a-holic artist even when not being paid for it, held him homebound unwilling to interact with large amounts of the public. It was intriguing to read Frantz`s description of Ditko`s physical self and environment at this meeting. This is an excellent article into the insight behind the genius / madness of our artistic heroes. Thank you Rob for providing a piece of history that I might not have been able to gather myself without it being presented here in Issue # 90. Everyone should pick up a copy of this issue if you want to explore the self revelation of what mainstream or indie artists endure for their craft. *Ditkomania* can be ordered at *www.ditko-fever.com/dmreturns.html*

I also wanted to give a shout out to Mike Tuz, whose book *The Passage in the Darkness and Other Stories* I am currently reading, for his support and encouragement of my own work on the *HeroCentral Universe*. I hope everyone has a great entrance into Spring with this March 20th passing. Great things to look forward to this year….Spring picnics, summer gasoline blends, and that extra hour regained in the fall. Thanks a lot Ben Franklin!

Avoir All!

Jason Bullock

LETTERS

Rob -

First off, thank you for sending your group's fanzine *Tetragrammaton Fragments* to me. It's an interesting little zine, even though it's mostly geared to comics, which is something that 40 to 50 years ago I was into, especially during the early to mid 1970s. Since something like 1982, I really have not been interested in comics, although I do enjoy some of the movies Hollywood has produced in recent years. My favorites have been the *Iron Man* and *Spiderman* flicks, although the *Batman* series has had some excellent versions, especially *The Dark Knight* and the two Michael Keaton movies. But, I no longer collect comic books, even though I have a couple dozen stored in a lock box. For that reason I really don't want to join the UFO, but do appreciate receiving the zine. And I do believe I owe you my thoughts about why.

Thinking about what you wrote in your "Noz Notes" section, I have to agree that most fanzine fans are more into science fiction and its attendant fandom, and that they also think of comics fandom as a subgenre. Time was, there was quite the crossover between comics and sf fandom, but ever since SF became Big Business (think of when *Star Wars* hit and the *Star Trek* film franchise was taking off) there has been a split. I think that's because there is simply too much of each right now; it is impossible for anyone to be an Omni-Fan anymore (as in, being involved in all sf-related activities). As a result, a fan specializes in his or her interests. For me, those are literary science fiction (books, films, tv shows, and stories) and fanzines with a recent turn to Steampunk literature and events. These are my favorite fannish interests -- despite the over-abundance of them -- and that's why I follow them. I expect most fans feel the same way.

By the way, I applaud your desire to get *T-Frags* out to more "traditional" fannish outlets. It is good, for example, that you discuss this topic and have put together a nice summation of your goals and responses you got from the FAN-EDS and FAAN-EDS groups on Facebook. Nicely done. Taral Wayne's musing about whether reaching a wider audience is possible when a fan editor's budget limits the zine's production numbers is a valid point. Also, I agree with Bruce Gillespie that most fanzine fans disassociate themselves with comics fandom not only because they consider comics fandom a "child" of traditional sf fandom, but also because many sf fans once were into comics as "kids" then simply outgrew comics as they "matured" into literary science fiction fans. Interests change as we go through life, so while some of us are fortunate enough to maintain a hobby interest throughout our entire lives, others grow into and out of assorted interests. To me it is all a part of how life goes.

Allow me to add one final thought: don't get discouraged at the response or lack thereof you get from sending out *T-Frags* to assorted fan writers and publishers. Most of us really appreciate getting fanzines on all sorts of subjects in the mail, and since some of us collected comics in our younger days, it's good to read what current comics fans are talking about. I like it.

So, thank you again for sending the zine to me, and I look forward to seeing the next issue. I will probably put out the next *Askew* the first week of April, which should coincide with the announcement of the DUFF candidates. Stay tuned.

All the best,

John Purcell
3744 Marielene Circle
College Station, TX 77845-3926

*[Thanks, John! Readers, I recommend contacting John at the address above -- or emailing him at **j_purcell54@yahoo.com** -- to request a copy of his new "ensmalled" (i.e., small page count but frequently-published) SF zine **Askew**. John also publishes the larger SF zine **Askance**, issues of which can be viewed as PDFs at **www.efanzines.com** If any non-members of the UFO have comments about this issue, feel free to pass them along to me for inclusion in T-Frags' letters section!* -- ROB IMES, Chairman. *]*

The UFO Constitution

Article One: Becoming a Member

To become a member of the **United Fanzine Organization** co-op, one must inform the Chairman of one's **application** and send a copy of his/her comic or zine to all members listed on the UFO roster. The membership will then **vote** on acceptance. (If the applicant's zine or comic is available to view online, the applicant may email the members a link to the pages for evaluation in lieu of mailing a printed copy; however, applicants should send a printed copy to members who are not regularly online or who specifically request the applicant to mail them a printed copy.) If a majority of the membership votes "yes" on the applicant's admission, he/she becomes a member. Applicants who receive a majority of "no" votes may apply again for membership at a later date.

Article Two: Membership Requirements

(a) All members are required to **publish a minimum of 20 pages** of new material (comic or text) per year. Web zines with equivalent material will count toward membership requirements. There is no maximum limit to the number of titles one may publish as memberzines.

(b) Each member is required to **mail a free copy of each memberzine**, as it is published, to all other co-op members. Publishers of webcomics should send hard copy versions of their online comics to the membership (as not all members may have internet access). Digital publishers must send an email to each member notifying them of their webzine. (Since webzines are free to all, those publishing print zines are not required to mail their zines to those publishing only on the web, but are encouraged to do so.)

(c) Each member is required to **submit a column** to at least every other issue of the UFO Newsletter (*Tetragrammaton Fragments*). The purpose of member columns is first to review the memberzines that one has received and second discuss club business (such as voting on amendments and applicants). *T-Frag* contributions are limited to a maximum of 10 pages each issue per member, unless the member receives the Chairman's consent to allow a higher page count for that particular issue of the newsletter.

(d) **Member dues are $20.00 annually**. These dues help to cover co-op promotion, and printing and mailing of the bi-monthly UFO Newsletter. If a member falls behind in his/her annual dues and/or publishing requirements, the member may ask the Chairman for a brief extension. If the member is dropped for failing to meet publishing requirements or newsletter participation, any remaining money in their account will be used toward their subscription to the newsletter.

(e) The UFO is limited to **25 members**. Others applying after the limit is reached will be placed on a waiting list and considered for membership in the order in which they applied. Waitlisters have the option of submitting a column to the UFO newsletter but they are not required to do so. It is at the discretion of each UFO member whether to send their memberzines to those on the waitlist since it is not required. UFO members are allowed to be members of other co-ops while they are in the UFO.

(f) **Honorary Members** are persons who have been voted into that position by a majority vote of the members. They may contribute to the newsletter, but have no voting power, are not required to pay the annual dues, and are not required to meet publication requirements. It is at the discretion of each member whether to send an Honorary Member a copy of their memberzine or not, as it is not required.

Article Three: Memberzine Requirements

(a) Each UFO publication must carry the **UFO symbol** on one of its four covers (exterior or interior front and back), preferably the front exterior cover. Webzines must display the symbol on their front page prominently.

(b) Each UFO memberzine (print or digital) is required to carry the **UFO Checklist**. Members may alter the wording in the Checklist as it appears in their own publications, as long as the changes are accurate and non-detrimental to those listed. (For minis or zines of 16 pages or less, an Abbreviated Checklist may be used, with simply the titles and prices of the books, and the names and addresses of the respective publishers.)

(c) The UFO does not **censor** its material, however responsibility and use of good taste and common sense in publishing are encouraged. The Chairman must publish member columns in the UFO newsletter unedited as long as they are within the page-count limit and not illegal or obscene in content.

Article Four: The UFO Chairman

(a) **Annual election**: A Chairman shall be elected in September, by a majority vote of the members, to a one-year term commencing in November. (Those running for the position of Chairman should start their campaigns no later than the July issue of the newsletter.)

(b) **Responsibilities**: An elected Chairman has the duties of editing and publishing the bi-monthly UFO newsletter, conducting the general co-op business, managing member dues accounts, or delegating these affairs. In consideration of the time and effort expended in the production of the UFO newsletter, a newly elected Chairman will be allowed two years -- dating from the publication of this first NL -- to publish an issue of his/her regular small press book, instead of the one zine a year requirement for the other members.

(c) **Emergency Chairman**: It is important that the UFO Chairman appoint an Emergency Chairman immediately upon assuming office. The Emergency Chairman shall assume the office of UFO Chairman if the elected Chairman resigns the position prior to the next election, or if the elected Chairman fails to publish the newsletter for more than 100 consecutive days.

(d) **Removal**: There is no limit to the amount of terms a Chairman may hold. The Chairman may be removed from office only by a majority vote. A Chairman who decides not to run for another term should make this known to the members prior to the publication of the July newsletter, so that other members may have time to announce their campaigns for the position.

The UFO CHECKLIST

The United Fanzine Organization (UFO) is a co-op of small-press comics publishers and creators dedicated to setting a higher standard of quality in independent and alternative press. The members mutually aid each other in the promotion and production of their own publications. Any small-press publisher interested in applying for membership in the UFO should contact the UFO Chairman: **Rob Imes, 13510 Cambridge #307, Southgate, MI 48195** or you can email him at ***robimes@yahoo.com*** The official UFO website: *http://unitedfanzineorganization.weebly.com*

TETRAGRAMMATON FRAGMENTS!! #226: The new issue of the UFO Newsletter, the central forum for members, containing columns & art that can't be found anywhere else. 32 digest-size B&W pages for **$2.50** postpaid in the USA from **Rob Imes, 13510 Cambridge #307, Southgate, MI 48195** or you can email him at ***robimes@yahoo.com*** for more info.

DITKOMANIA #90: This issue of the fanzine devoted to comics creator Steve Ditko features a long article by former ACE Comics publisher **Ron Frantz** about working with Ditko in the late 1980s, and the abandoned plans to publish *Ooky & Zooky*, a comic by Superman co-creator **Jerry Siegel**. 44-page B&W digest for **$3.00** postpaid in the USA from **Rob Imes** (see address above).

FANTASY THEATER #22: New adventure of the female barbarian Glorianna, plus a backup tale about Capella. A letters page (including fan art) rounds out this 32-page B&W digest-size comic for **$2.00** postpaid from **J. Kevin Carrier, 1800 Leven Lane, Milford, OH 45150**. Email ***jkcarrier@aol.com*** for more info.

HERO CENTRAL UNIVERSE #7: It's an epic battle as Raiden squares off against a powerful minion of Dracula in the skies above the city. Also, the return of Michael Faraday! 24-page B&W digest comic with color cover for **$3.00** postpaid from **Jason Bullock, P. O. Box 2684, Loganville, GA 30052**. Email ***jasonb@girafnetwork.com*** for more info or visit HCU on the web at **http://www.girafnetwork.org**

HCU: CONFIDENTIAL #3: Get more info about the HCU with this companion zine that provides background info & character profiles. 20-page B&W digest zine (with color cover) for only **$1.00** postpaid from **Jason Bullock, P. O. Box 2684, Loganville, GA 30052**. Email: ***jasonb@girafnetwork.com*** Web: **http://www.girafnetwork.org**

TALES OF FANTASY #59: Debut of a new super-powered costumed character called The Hand! Plus a prose SF tale featuring Bart Rover, a long letters page and a *Space Cat* strip. 50-page B&W digest comic (with color covers) for only **$3.00** postpaid in the USA from **Larry Johnson, 31 Greenbrook Rd., Hyde Park, MA 02136**. Email ***LewBrown75@yahoo.com*** or visit **www.LarryJohnsonartist.com**

TALES OF FANTASY #60: The 25th anniversary issue features a 34-page science fiction strip starring Jesse Stuart, plus the usual features like *Space Cat* and a long lettercol. Back cover by Larry Blake. 48-page B&W digest comic book for **$3.00** postpaid in the USA from **Larry Johnson** (see address above).

VALIANT EFFORTS Vol. 3 #3: The origin of The Golden Protector concludes plus the introduction of the costumed crimefighting team called StreetFury! Full-size 36-page B&W comic with a color cover for **$3.00** postpaid from **Don Ensign, 250-A S. Paseo Cerro, Green Valley, AZ 85614**. Email him at ***donensign@yahoo.com*** for info.

Humphrey BOGART
Ingrid BERGMAN
Paul HENREID
IN
Casablanca
Directed by MICHAEL CURTIZ
WITH CLAUDE RAINS AND SIDNEY GREENSTREET